

Participation

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Compared to some medical societies, the American Academy of Emergency Medicine is small, with just over 8,000 members — including residents and students. The Academy, however, has influence far greater than its numbers would indicate. There are two reasons for this. First, our principles and the steadfast vigor with which we defend them have given AAEM a well-deserved reputation for occupying the moral high ground in our specialty. Even our opponents admire us for never selling out, the same way a mobster admires a cop who won't take a bribe — although he may see that cop as an obstacle at the same time. Second, many Academy members are active participants in the organization, taking practical action to promote the interests of our specialty, our patients, and individual emergency physicians. They do more than just renew their memberships and pay their dues on time, although those things are important. They also serve on AAEM committees, as committee chairs, on the board of directors, and as officers — or they write articles for *Common Sense*!

Less obvious forms of participation are also important: attending the annual Scientific Assembly or one of the several international meetings AAEM co-sponsors, such as the Mediterranean Emergency Medicine Congress in Marseille, France, September 8-11, 2013; recruiting new members for the Academy; calling legislators or other leaders about medical issues when asked; or even something as simple as writing a letter to the editor of *Common Sense* to voice your opinion on an issue or something we have published.

It is on *Common Sense* that I want to focus. It has been just over a year since we changed the format of the newsletter, going to multicolored, glossy paper. The professional staff and I also tightened up the production process, shortening the time between article submission and publication. In addition, the average size of each print issue has increased, with content that I hope you find valuable, and we have started new features such as Letters to the Editor and Curbside Consult. With the help of AAEM/RSA and the Social Media Committee, we have enhanced our online and social media offerings. All this is directed to making *Common Sense* more interactive, more timely, and more interesting to read.

I want *Common Sense* to be such an accurate reflection of AAEM and its members that, when you give a copy to a colleague who is not a member of the Academy, he or she reads it and comes back to you wanting to join. For that goal to become reality, I need your help. I **need your participation**. Some of you have experience or expertise that would be valuable or interesting to other emergency physicians, or have faced a problem that many other emergency physicians must overcome too. Write an article about it and send it to me. I am always looking for good material to publish, especially on things like the intersection of emergency medicine and business, economics, regulation,

law, politics, and ethics. If you have something to say but don't think it worthy of an entire article, write a letter to the editor. If you read something in *Common Sense* that makes you mad and you think I'm an idiot, write a letter to the editor. If you read something you love and you think I'm a genius, write a letter to the editor. If you are having a problem of some kind at work, especially if it's not a clinical issue, write to Curbside Consult and ask for advice. If practicing emergency medicine is creating a personal problem of some kind for you, write to Curbside Consult. In both cases the odds are good that other emergency physicians are having similar problems and will benefit from the answer to your question. Both the Letters to the Editor and Curbside Consult features can be accessed via the AAEM website, and answers will be posted quickly online too, so you don't have to wait for the next print edition of *Common Sense* to get a response. Whether you are authoring an article, going to Curbside Consult for advice, or writing a letter to the editor — I need to hear from you in order to make our newsletter a good read — and this is an easy but meaningful way to participate in the life of AAEM.

If you want to do more than that, then serve on a committee; join your AAEM state chapter or found one in your state (AAEM's staff makes that easy); run for office or for the board of directors (fall is nominating time); or come to D.C. during the next fly-in and meet with the Academy's lobbyists, followed by a trip to Capitol Hill to meet with legislators and their staffers. AAEM is only as strong as its members choose to make it. The Academy needs your participation! ■

We're listening, send us your thoughts!

